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ABSTRACT

The nature of competent teaching is discussed and distinctions between competent and incompetent teaching are made. Teaching involves the intention to bring about learning and competence in a method designed to bring about learning. Teaching is defined as educative when it is conducted in a morally acceptable manner and when the content of what is to be learned is educationally valuable. In the case of the incompetent teacher, there is an extremely poor fit between the actions of the teacher and those of the pupils. Although reciprocity and cooperation may be poor, the pupils may still learn by their own efforts. It may also be the case that learning does not occur although the teacher displays a high level of competence. It is necessary for the teacher to know more than the learner. A teacher's responsibility for bringing about learning requires taking the initiative in encouraging students to be actively involved in the teaching-learning situation and a professional interest in the problems that students encounter and the ways in which they study. Familiarity with research into the practicalities of learning and the discussion of techniques with colleagues and students are necessary. Applications of these ideas to higher education and the issue of the authority of the teacher are discussed. (SW)

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COMPETENT TEACHING: SOME PRE-REQUISITES AND SOME IMPLICATIONS

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Most academics are under a contractual obligation to engage in teaching yet if asked to give even a brief outline of a general account of the nature of teaching many of them would probably be at a loss. Any attempt to conduct empirical inquiries aimed at the improvement of teaching pre-supposes that we know what teaching is and that we can recognize an example of teaching when we see one. In fact, there is a good deal of uncertainty as to what is to be counted as an example of teaching since the term commonly covers a very diverse range of activities the relationships between which are unclear. Examples of activities which might count as teaching come readily to mind: telling, instructing, showing, indoctrinating, explaining, preaching, demonstrating, correcting, and so on. Here I shall only be concerned with the development of a very general theoretical analysis of teaching in order to provide a basis for commenting upon some of the practicalities of teaching in the context of higher education. Teaching is such an important human activity that it is unnecessary to justify an attempt to clarify our ideas about what is involved in it.

A useful point of departure is the position taken by Scheffler[1] and the criticisms of this offered by Miss Joan Cooper.[2] Scheffler proposes three criteria to be satisfied for an activity to count as an example of teaching, (1) there must be an intention to bring about learning, (2) the methods used must be apt for the bringing about of learning and (3) the methods used must be morally acceptable. The first of these is the least contentious since we could make no sense of a claim to be engaged in teaching if at the same time the claimant denied any desire to bring about learning in those being taught. All of our ideas about teaching are parasitic upon our concept of 'learning', but I do not propose to explore that here.[3] If there is no intention to bring about learning then we would at once deny that teaching is taking place. Joan Cooper, however, argues that there could be cases in which this criterion need not be satisfied and she offers as an example the case of a man who went to Cézanne in order to learn how to paint even though he knew that Cézanne would do nothing whatever to assist him.

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1. I. Scheffler, The Language of Education. Springfield, Ill.: Charles Thomas, 1960, ch. 4.

2. Joan Cooper, 'Criteria for successful teaching.' Proceedings of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain 1966, 5-18, 1966.

3. Very briefly, my view is that learning should be viewed as an activity involving intentionality rather than as a process. This would rule out behavioural changes brought about by such procedures as conditioning and hypnosis.

> Eventually he leaves Aix, achieves a reputation and professes humbly that Cézanne was his master and taught him all he (the pupil) knows. Now, can Cézanne be said to have been teaching this pupil when he was just painting and allowing the pupil to be there with him? He can hardly be said to have been trying to teach him. Perhaps he intended to teach him, but this only amounts to his not being unwilling to allow the pupil to learn from him. A teacher may very well go about things in this way and yet be considered an inspired teacher.[1]

This example fails to carry conviction, for being willing to allow what I am doing to be observed by others is not equivalent to teaching them to do what I am doing unless I also intend that they learn to do it. Even then it may not be sufficient since it may also be necessary, although I am not so sure about this, for me to vary the manner of my action in order to make its characteristics more explicit. The main problem here is that of the most appropriate description to give to the activity described above: is Cézanne painting or teaching or both? This can only be determined by ascertaining the intentions of the agent and his own conception of what it is that he is doing. He could well be engaged in painting and at the same time intend that an observer learn by watching him in which case we would allow that he was also doing some teaching although this would be subordinate to his main task which is that of creating a painting. In such a case it would make perfectly good sense for the master to say that the best way for him to teach his pupil is that of allowing the latter to watch him at work.

Joan Cooper does not offer any examples of inspired teachers who have taught in this fashion but she may well have someone like Socrates in mind. It could be claimed that those who engaged in argument with Socrates learnt a great deal about the meanings of 'justice', 'knowledge' and 'truth' while at the same time, perhaps, improving their skill in argument. But even if this were so it would not establish that Socrates was a teacher unless it could be shown that he participated in arguments with others with the intention that others learn such things, for unless we insist upon this we shall be obliged to allow that every time we engage in argument we also engage in teaching. This could be generalized to such an extent that we might be driven to saying that anything which we do in the company of others or, while under observation, is to be counted as teaching. But when people engage in argument they usually intend conviction rather than learning to be the result. When philosophers argue with each other they are not trying to teach anything to their colleagues:

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1. Ibid., p. 10.

they are concerned with securing assent to their own views or with exposing them to criticism and rebuttal. Of course, a philosopher may have the same argument with a student in a tutorial but in such a case the pedagogic intent would almost certainly be manifested in the manner in which the argument was conducted and by the addition of pedagogic remarks aimed at deepening the student's understanding, improving his skills and correcting his mistakes. Similarly, I may well say that I learnt a good deal from an interesting conversation with another traveller on the way home but it does not follow from this that any teaching had taken place. In order to avoid having to say that a great range of our verbal interactions with other persons are examples of teaching we must insist upon the intention to bring about learning as a criterion of teaching.

But to entertain an intention means very little unless it is coupled with doing something relevant to the realization of this intention and this leads to Scheffler's second criterion: the method adopted must be '.... not unreasonably thought to be likely to achieve the learning aimed at.'[1] This involves some appraisal of teaching skills and techniques and is bound closely to our judgments of a teacher's competence: I shall discuss this latter notion shortly.

Scheffler's third criterion is intended to rule out some procedures as examples of teaching, regardless of whether they are productive of learning, on the ground that they are morally objectionable: this results in the disqualification of co-ercion, conditioning, propaganda, hypnosis, drug-taking and the like. But this criterion, as Joan Cooper has pointed out, is formulated in terms of a highly rationalistic model of teaching which appears to be derived from the experience of teaching philosophy to undergraduates and is scarcely applicable to the work of teaching young children or to attempt to foster such achievements as the appreciation of art and literature. According to this model, at the heart of teaching is the requirement that we reveal to the learner our reasons for the beliefs we hold and the actions we undertake and submit them to his criticism. If we accept this account then we shall be forced to deny that someone who gives instruction without disclosing rationales is teaching, and we shall also have to re-describe the alleged pedagogic activities of all those whom we currently suppose to be teaching very young children and the mentally retarded. Any general account of teaching which forces us to such conclusions seems unduly restrictive. If, on the other hand,

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1. Scheffler, op.cit., p. 68.

we wish to exclude conditioning and hypnosis then this can readily be achieved by defining 'learning' in such a way that such procedures cannot be said to be related to it.

If we are seeking a general characterization of teaching it would seem that we can dispense with Scheffler's third criterion since even if we disapproved of the methods which were being employed this would not oblige us to deny that teaching was taking place. Some form of his second criterion, however, appears to be indispensable even though it involves an obscure distinction (not made by Scheffler) between teaching incompetently and not teaching at all. It has already been suggested that for someone to be said to be teaching some form of activity is necessarily involved and this activity must be relevant to the aim of bringing about learning since we would not be prepared to allow <u>any</u> activity to count as teaching. What we are concerned with here is competence and this only has meaning in relation to the possibility of successful outcomes. Total incompetence would require an intention to bring about learning coupled with the adoption of methods known to be completely unrelated to success. This might more accurately be described as 'trying to teach.' But to say that someone is teaching is to allow that at least a minimal competence is being displayed in that the methods being used have some chance of bringing about learning even though the likelihood of a successful outcome may be very limited.

It is now clear that we need to distinguish between each of the following: non-teaching (the use of techniques which are totally unrelated to success), incompetent teaching (the use of techniques which are very weakly related to success). The general nature of the distinction between competent and incompetent teaching can be brought out by considering the case of a 'demonstration lesson' in which a student teacher, or an expert, shows that he knows how to teach, say, long division to eight-year old children. Such demonstrations can be given without any children being present in which case the possibility of success in the sense of actually bringing about learning is ruled out completely and the absence of intentionality is guaranteed. All that is being demonstrated is the possession of knowledge and skills which, given such conditions as the presence of suitably motivated children, are likely to bring about the desired learning. Competence, of course, is no guarantee of success.

Another appraisal category which we apply to the activity of teaching relates to both the manner of teaching and the content of what is being taught.

Teaching episodes which satisfy this criterion I shall call 'educative teaching.' Teaching is 'educative' in this sense when it is conducted in a morally acceptable manner and when the content of what is to be learnt is educationally valuable: Fagin was a highly successful teacher but not an educative one. Finally, there is the question of success and its relation to the other criteria - not so easy to answer as may appear at first sight.

If we define 'successful teaching' as that which results in the attainment of the desired learning achievements then it will be possible for the incompetent teacher to be successful since it is well-known that pupils are sometimes able to compensate for perceived teacher incompetence by working harder and learning successfully despite the teacher.[1] Similarly, someone who intended to bring about learning but who failed to meet even the minimum competence standards could be said to achieve success for the same reason. How can we avoid the unacceptable conclusion that in such cases successful teaching has taken place? I shall ignore the second example as it is too bizarre to merit serious consideration, but the first is more worrying since we would not wish teachers to be able to claim credit for achievements for which they are not responsible. A lazy and very poor teacher's pupils could obtain the same results in an examination as those of his highly skilled and hard-working colleague: how can we avoid saying that they are both successful? Perhaps the solution lies in saying that one is successful because learning resulted from what he did but the other was unsuccessful because learning resulted from the pupils' realisation of the fact that what the teacher was doing was highly unlikely to lead to their learning anything. It should be noted that to define teaching as 'causing people to learn'[2] is of no help here as it forces us to say that it was the teacher's incompetence which caused the learning to occur and it would then follow that he was a successful teacher. Neither is it any use to require each of those teachers to intend learning to result from what they do since they could both claim such an intention. What is needed is a tightening up of the connection between the actions of the teacher and those of the pupils: the teacher to whom we wish to ascribe success achieves a very close fit between what he does and what his pupils do in the sense that the learners carry out his instructions, follow his

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1. Humphrey Sibthorpe was Professor of Botany at Oxford from 1747 to 1784 and during this period he delivered only one lecture. When Joseph Banks became an undergraduate he decided that if he wished to learn any Botany then he would have to make his own arrangements.

2. J.L. Kuethe, The Teaching-Learning Process. Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1968, p. 5.

directions, attend to what he is saying and, in general, co-operate with his efforts to assist them to learn. In the case of the incompetent teacher, however, there is an extremely poor fit between the actions of the teacher and those of the pupils, there is virtually no reciprocity and no co-operation: the pupils are compelled to work according to a plan devised by themselves, a plan which is expressly designed to compensate for the shortcomings of the teacher. This is a practical issue of some importance and the most promising solution to it would appear to lie in requiring reciprocity and mutuality between teachers and learners.

The relationship between teaching in general and teaching successfully is far less problematical despite the fact that a number of prominent theorists have mistakenly identified the two. Kilpatrick, for example, claimed that 'We haven't taught, until the child has learned.'[1] And Dewey wrote:

> We should ridicule a merchant who said that he had sold a great many goods although no one had bought any. But perhaps there are teachers who think they have done a good day's teaching irrespective of what pupils have learned. There is the same exact equation between teaching and learning that there is between buying and selling.[2]

But it is absurd to demand that all teachers be successful all of the time: from the fact that his pupils failed to learn it does not follow that a teacher was not engaged in teaching. In a lecture to 1,000 students some of them will be learning (in the achievement sense) and some will not: a contradiction results if we say that the lecturer is both teaching and not teaching at the same time. We cannot determine whether or not teaching is taking place by looking at individual students. Another bizarre consequence of adopting Dewey's position is that we can only decide retrospectively whether a particular activity was to be counted as an example of teaching since it is only after the event that we can determine whether or not the learning has taken place.

This suggests that we cannot require more of a teacher than a reasonable degree of competence: we cannot insist that he be successful all of the time, most of the time, or even (perhaps) some of the time as circumstances may be heavily stacked against him. It might be objected that if we encountered a doctor who never effected a cure or a barrister who never won a case then this would lead us to judge that they were incompetent. But the doctor might

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1. W.H. Kilpatrick, Foundations of Method. New York: Macmillan, 1925, p. 268.

2. J. Dewey, How We Think. Boston: Heath, 1933, pp. 35-36.

be a specialist in incurable diseases and the lawyer might take on only hopeless cases as a challenge to his skill. In both cases they might perform brilliantly yet without success. Teachers also have their problems: recalcitrant and unintelligent children, inadequate materials, poor working conditions, hostile parents, a very unfavourable home background, and so on. In evaluating a teacher's skills we should therefore restrict ourselves to asking: 'Is he doing all that anyone could reasonably be expected to do in this situation?' If learning does not occur it does not follow from this that the teacher has not displayed a high level of competence. We must be willing to give teachers their due despite their pupils and this is unlikely to be done if we focus all our attention upon the behaviour and achievements of the learners.

We must now relate our analysis of teaching to the practicalities of higher education. In order to teach it is clearly necessary for the teacher to know more than the learner: this may seem an obvious point yet it has been challenged by those students who believe that universities are excessively authoritarian institutions. Simon Hoggart, for example, in discussing the vogue for 'free universities' in the late sixties, wrote:

> The Free Universities springing up all over the country are important here. For there is no distinction drawn between teacher and taught; those who deliver the talks or lead the discussions may know more than the rest to begin with; but the process followed is of sharing knowledge in equal partnership and of a mutual and difficult effort to make the vital connections. This is not just cant, even if it doesn't work all the time.[1]

The main problem with this is that it could not work any of the time since the very possibility of teaching depends upon superior knowledge on the part of the teacher. If this superiority is absent then teaching cannot, logically cannot, take place, but it does not follow from this that there can be no learning since it is obvious that a great deal can be learnt from serious discussion with one's peers. What Hoggart is really concerned about, one suspects, is the distinction between 'teaching with authority' and teaching in an authoritarian manner: all teachers should teach with the authority of knowledge but this can be done without any need to threaten, coerce or browbeat students and without excluding students from discussion of the content of what is to be taught, the manner of teaching and the ways in

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1. S. Hoggart, 'Cambridge anti-memories.' The Guardian, 17 October 1968.

which student achievements are to be assessed. John Holt has given a brilliant description of the way in which teachers can use their authority to corrupt both learning and human relationships in schools and if we substitute 'students' for 'children' in the following passage it applies with equal force to many university teachers.

> We adults destroy most of the intellectual and creative capacity of children by the things we do to them or make them do. We destroy this capacity above all by making them afraid, afraid of not doing what other people want, of not pleasing, of making mistakes, of failing, of being wrong. Thus we make them afraid to gamble, afraid to experiment, afraid to try the difficult and the unknown. Even when we do not create children's fears, when they come to us with fears ready-made and built-in, we use these fears as handles to manipulate them and get them to do what we want..... For we like children who are a little afraid of us, docile, deferential children, though not, of course, if they are so obviously afraid that they threaten our image of ourselves as kind, lovable people whom there is no need to fear.[1]

Unfortunately, many students are quite happy to be deferential, to leave all responsibilities and decisions to the teacher and to conceal their apathy by acquiescing in authoritarianism. Not only does it make for an easy life but it also pays-off in terms of success in assignments, examinations and favourable referees' reports: it is often the highway to advancement for both teachers and students. The following remarks by a second-year science student are a remarkably honest and perceptive comment on this aspect of student apathy:

> The main thing wrong with the department is the students. We have destroyed any concept of education that the staff have created. We have destroyed ourselves. We have destroyed ourselves by being apathetic. From the very first day we walked into the Schuster Laboratory we have been steam-rollered into apathy and bewilderment by the very nature of the subject we study. Physics .... No opportunity has been given us to discuss our subject for what it is, why it is and where it is. All right, you can blame the staff. I don't. They have never been asked by the students for such discussion. I doubt if they will. A series of general lectures last year on Science and Politics was attended by six people. Six out of 300 undergraduates.[2]

This is probably being over-generous to the staff since their over-riding responsibility for bringing about learning requires that they take the initiative in encouraging students to be actively involved in the teaching-

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1. J. Holt, How Children Fail. New York: Pitman, 1964, pp. 167-68.

2. I. Kernaghan, Apathy amongst Physics Students. Mimeographed document circulated by a Manchester University student in 1968.

learning situation. It also requires them to take a deep professional interest in the problems which students encounter and the ways in which they study by taking every opportunity to raise these issues both formally in the teaching situation and informally in conversation. This in turn demands some familiarity with research into the practicalities of learning, a topic of which most teachers are remarkably ignorant.

The same can be said of teaching. In order to teach effectively it is important to subject what one does to continuous critical scrutiny, to discuss techniques with colleagues and students, and to have some familiarity with the research literature: in other words, to take a professional interest in what one is doing. Contrary to what many students believe, the majority of lecturers are very much concerned about the quality of their teaching, especially if they feel that it is unsatisfactory. Students are sometimes remarkably insensitive about this. I once gave several lectures in a series to which a number of members of the department contributed and shortly after the last of mine had been delivered a student, who was quite unknown to me, spoke to me afterwards and asked if I would be giving any more. When I said that I would not he said 'Good' and turned away. It is difficult to imagine a more crushing and unhelpful comment!

University teachers are often very reluctant to discuss their teaching activities despite their deep personal concern with these: such matters are rarely aired in public and it is easy to assume that any difficulties which we experience are peculiar to oneself. There is a need for regular informal meetings at which small groups of staff can discuss common problems and exchange ideas about their solution. There is also a need for the provision of more formal arrangements to assist the teaching staff to extend their repetoire of skills and develop a deeper understanding of the activity to which they devote a major part of their working lives. It is a most remarkable fact that efforts in this direction commonly meet with hostility and suspicion from members of the teaching staff: no other professional group is so ill-equipped for the successful exercise of the required skills as we teachers in higher education. Yet the provision of programmes designed to assist with the improvement of teaching is still very much in its infancy.[1]

Another implication of the analysis of teaching developed earlier concerns the scope of a teacher's responsibilities. As far as the fostering of learning is concerned the position is fairly clear since every action of

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1. J.F. Wergin et al. "The practice of faculty development: an experience-derived model." Journal of Higher Education, 47, 289-308, 1976.

a teacher has to be justified in these terms. When tutorials, for example, drift aimlessly into mere chat and idle conversation then teaching ceases since the purpose of teaching is not to while away the time or merely to entertain. A lecturer who regales his students with amusing anecdotes for the sole purpose of entertaining his audience is indistinguishable from a night-club performer: in order to establish a teaching claim he must show that the anecdotes were intended to illustrate a point or to make his teaching more effective by introducing some light relief. But many lecturers attach great importance to social contacts with students and some view this aspect of their work as having almost equal significance with teaching and as possessing great educational value: if it cannot be justified as a teaching activity how is it to be viewed?

It could be argued that getting to know students can properly count as part of teaching since it seems likely that students will learn more from people with whom they have social contacts outside of the formal teaching situation.[1] This may well be the case but it should still be possible to justify what is usually meant by 'good staff-student relations' independently of teaching. This can best be done by considering other elements in the role of the university teacher such as those of provider of careers advice, referee for job applications, counsellor on personal problems. Most university teachers are called upon to perform these roles from time to time and some spend a good deal of their energies in helping students in these ways since they conceive of their work as involving much more than teaching and research. Yet to acquire the personal knowledge of students which is required to assist them successfully in these areas almost inevitably fosters a relationship which sometimes reaches into friendship and even where it does not extend that far it is almost bound to have a profound influence upon the more formal teaching relationship. To spend time talking to students informally means less time for other activities and many staff escape by making themselves inaccessible in order to indulge in pursuits which they believe, often correctly, will be more likely to further their careers. This not only weakens the sense of community within a university but it also causes much justifiable resentment among students who, prior to entry, had anticipated a fairly high level of informal contact with staff. Many find little of the intellectual excitement and 'clash of mind with mind' which some of the public pronouncements of university people had led them to expect and it is not surprising that

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1. See: R.C. Wilson and J.G. Gaff, College Professors and their Impact on Students. New York: Wiley, 1975.

many of them feel badly let down before the end of their first year.

This disappointment has led some to the conclusion that if only universities can be thoroughly 'democratized' then the teaching/learning situation will be transformed into one in which teachers and taught will join together in the common task of advancing knowledge and understanding. This view rests upon the traditional concept of the university as a community of scholars and its adoption is prompted by the feeling that the universities have almost entirely abandoned this ideal in their pursuit of quite different ends, a betrayal which may be clearly seen in the widespread neglect of both teaching and community life. A commentator[1] on the student protest movement in America convincingly rebuts explanations of this phenomenon which are couched in terms of generational revolt, permissive child-rearing practices or the alienation of youth, and suggests instead that it can be explained in terms of the encroachment of the capitalist ethos upon the world of knowledge and culture. Universities, especially in the United States, have come more and more to be run as if they were business enterprises and industrial methods have increasingly been applied to the problem of poor teaching in the form of costly technology and hordes of graduate teaching assistants. Many students who have adapted to the conditions of work in the 'knowledge factory' are no longer able to perceive the university as representing values other than purely commercial ones. A student who was asked his views on the commercial activities of firms which sell essays and dissertations on demand replied: 'It's a lot like the business world. School is becoming a business, and buying a paper is just one more phase of that business. I don't feel there's anything morally wrong.'[2]

As was suggested earlier, anyone who proposes that all distinctions between teachers and learners should be abolished will have to abandon the notion of teaching altogether and replace it with the concept of a joint enterprise of discovery since where all are equally ignorant (or knowledgeable) none can teach.' I have been arguing throughout that the whole point of higher education is to bring students to a state of independence and autonomy and this pre-supposes that while at university they still require guidance and teaching in order to explore their own intellectual, social and personal worlds. Unfortunately, this help is often offered in unsuitable forms and is then correctly perceived by students to be a hindrance to the attainment of those achievements which it is the object of universities to foster.

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1. M.W. Miles, The Radical Probe: The Logic of Student Rebellion. New York: Atheneum Press, 1971.

2. Quoted in Newsweek, 20 March 1972, p. 44.

There is frequently a lack of understanding here on both sides. Students sometimes fail to appreciate that there are limits to the application of concepts such as 'participation' and 'democracy' in intellectual and educational contexts. Arguments are not to be settled by counting heads and the standards of correctness appropriate to scholarship are not determined in the same fashion as are our social and political arrangements. In learning a skill one simply has to acknowledge that there is a correct manner of performing it: mountaineers and mariners do not vote on the correct way of tying a bowline before entrusting their lives to a knot. Since this is so then the best way of learning to succeed in the performance of complex and demanding intellectual tasks is to go to those who are skilled in such matters and try to profit from what they are able to teach.

Teachers are also sometimes guilty of using the quite legitimate authority which their knowledge confers upon them in ways which are quite unjustifiable: they are often very reluctant to allow any independence to students and appear determined to exercise such a degree of paternalistic control that students are effectively prevented from achieving the autonomy which they as teachers are allegedly fostering. It is still alarmingly commonplace to hear lecturers defend their failure to provide students with opportunities to practise such skills as criticizing, planning, designing experiments and formulating hypotheses, by claiming that the students are incapable of doing such things because they do not possess sufficient factual information. As a result, too many graduates are poorly equipped to meet the demands which they will immediately encounter in their professional work. They are the victims of their teachers' over-indulgent attitudes and tender-mindedness.

To improve the quality of teaching and learning major structural changes must be brought about within higher education. The student protest movement of the late sixties has already encouraged some faltering steps towards the democratization of university government by giving more power, if only in a modest way, both to junior staff and students. But just as we learn to participate socially and politically if we live and work in a participatory environment[1] so we learn to be intellectually autonomous more effectively in learning situations which encourage a deep involvement on the part of students. The re-structuring of teaching and learning which this demands has scarcely begun: we continue to rely heavily upon lecturing and

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1. See: Carole Pateman, Participation and Democratic Theory. Cambridge: The University Press, 1970.

similar techniques which ask almost nothing of the student. The alarming dependency which is created by our teaching methods was forcefully impressed upon me several years ago when I was teaching at Manchester University. During the winter part-time graduate students would drive, after a tiring day of professional work, thirty miles in bad weather conditions to attend evening lectures. Sometimes they would arrive to be confronted with a notice informing them that the lecturer was ill and the class cancelled. They then returned home and it never seemed to occur to them that there was anything else that they could usefully do: they were totally dependent upon the teacher and were quite incapable of organizing a discussion among themselves. An observer wandering around any university will readily note that if the lecturer does not appear within ten minutes or so then the students go away. What have we done to these students that they are so helpless in our absence? When are they going to learn to manage without us? Not until after they have graduated it seems.

Students must be helped to acquire more faith in their own abilities and lecturers need to show more trust in students by encouraging them to take much more responsibility for their own learning. If primary school children can display and enjoy this trust then surely undergraduates should be expected to do so?